

# Singita



Hippopotamus. Photo by Walter Mabilane

**WILDLIFE JOURNAL**  
**SINGITA KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA**  
**For the month of April, 2026**

**Temperature**

Average minimum: 19°C (66°F)  
Minimum recorded: 11°C (52°F)  
Average maximum: 30°C (86°F)  
Maximum recorded: 35°C (95°F)

**Rainfall Recorded**

For the month: 118 mm  
Season to date: 1 354 mm  
(\*Season = Oct to Sept)

**Sunrise & Sunset**

Sunrise: 06h10  
Sunset: 17h25

April proved to be a month of shifting seasons and unexpected turns in the bush. A surprise mid-month downpour brought substantial rainfall, once again flooding the rivers and briefly reshaping the landscape. As we move deeper into autumn, the mornings have taken on a crisp edge, and in some areas the grass is beginning to lose its vibrant green hue. However, for the most part, the concession remains lush, and remarkably wet, with seep-lines and smaller streams still flowing steadily. With so much residual moisture in the system, it is likely to be some time before conditions begin to dry out. Although the rainy season is technically drawing to a close, experience has taught us that out here, it is always wise to expect the unexpected.

**A Sightings Snapshot for April follows:**

## Lions

- The Chava Pride has been a regular and welcome presence across the concession this month, with frequent sightings along the S41 and in the north-western reaches. The pride continues to thrive, with six adorable cubs in tow, often seen playfully trailing the adults as they move between areas. A standout moment this month was observing the pride feeding on a wildebeest near the northern boundary, showing their strength and importance of cohesion within this growing family.
- For the first week of the month, the larger portion of the Mananga Pride was consistently seen around the central depression before melting away into the mountainous terrain. With the rivers rising and falling, crossing points shift constantly, often influencing the movements of these big cats; like domestic cats, lions and leopards are notably reluctant to get their paws wet. Meanwhile, the three Mananga lionesses that split from the pride some months ago, likely to draw the attention of the then-new Sonop males while younger members remained hidden, continue to move independently. One of these lionesses is showing signs of lactation. Given that mating was observed toward the end of last year, this raises the exciting possibility that a new generation, sired by the Sonop males, may soon be revealed.
- After several months without sightings, it was a welcome surprise to finally encounter members of the Shish Pride again, suggesting they may have shifted their territory south of the lodges. Towards the end of the month, four subadults, now roughly three years old, were seen resting on the H6 one evening, and continued to appear sporadically in the area over the following week. Excitement grew when, one afternoon along the western boundary, two adult lionesses emerged accompanied by two tiny, spotted cubs, offspring of the “short-maned” male, estimated to be around two months old. One of the lionesses appears heavily pregnant, hinting that the pride may soon grow further.

## Leopards

- This month delivered several memorable leopard sightings across the Kruger concession. The Zamani male was observed mating with an unknown female on Gudzane Loop, followed by a clear sighting of him resting with an impala ewe in a leadwood.
- The Lebombo male made a few appearances throughout his territory, with the most unforgettable encounter occurring when my tracker and I stopped to clear a large branch from the road. As he tossed it aside, the Lebombo male suddenly leapt out from behind a nearby bush, startled, and dashed a few metres before settling again beneath a small shrub. He later revealed he had been feeding on an impala lamb stashed in a leadwood tree, and was later joined by hyenas who lingered below.
- The Dumbana female was seen once this month on the N’wanetsi Big Bend, and her long disappearance has been hinting towards her potentially having cubs. Toward the end of the month, one cub was spotted on the northern banks at a beautiful bend in the river, a location that has previously provided some of the most memorable sightings of Dumbana and her last two litters.

### African wild dogs

- Wild dog activity this month centred around a pack of eight individuals that spent a considerable amount of time south of the N’wanetsi River, particularly following the mid-month rains which caused water levels to rise and made crossing impossible. This provided consistent viewing opportunities, and on more than one occasion we were fortunate enough to witness them hunting impala. These hunts remain some of the most exhilarating sightings in the bush, as the dogs surge forward with relentless energy, leaping through the long grass while impala scatter in all directions.

## Elephants

- Elephant sightings were a daily highlight, with regular encounters of breeding herds moving through the landscape, often accompanied by very young calves. In addition, large solitary bulls and energetic bachelor groups gave added variety. One particularly memorable morning found more than 40

elephants spread across the breathtaking Amphitheatre, where a sweeping curved ridge and sheer cliff faces rise dramatically above the open grassland to the west, creating a spectacular backdrop.

### **Spotted hyenas**

- Spotted hyena sightings were frequent and highly entertaining this month, largely due to multiple den-sites along the H6. In the absence of large termite mounds—typically favoured in other parts of the Kruger—the clan has adapted by using a culvert beneath the road as a den, from which incredibly confident cubs can often be seen venturing out to explore. Large clans of over 12 individuals were regularly observed in the late afternoons, sprawled across the road as mothers suckled their young before the clan set off for the night. An especially memorable encounter early in the month involved six hyenas and the subadults from the Shish Pride, locked in a tense standoff that played out like a cautious game of cat and mouse as each group assessed the other.

### **Buffalos**

- Buffalo movements this month have been widely dispersed across the park, with herds following their characteristic slow, circular grazing patterns that can take weeks to complete. With abundant water and lush grazing available throughout the area, their movements have been less pronounced, resulting in relatively few sightings overall. Most encounters came in the form of smaller groups, with herds of up to eight individuals occasionally seen moving steadily along the southern sections of the S41.

### **Plains game**

- Plains game sightings reflected a noticeable shift in distribution, largely influenced by the mid-month rains and subsequent flooding. With water now widespread and grazing conditions significantly improved across the landscape, species such as impala, zebra, and wildebeest have become more dispersed, no longer needing to concentrate around permanent water sources. This has resulted in fewer large congregations and more scattered, mobile groups taking advantage of the fresh flush of grass in newly accessible areas. Additionally, some low-lying regions became temporarily waterlogged, encouraging animals to favour slightly higher ground, further contributing to the change in their usual movement patterns and making sightings a little less predictable, but still rewarding.

### **Rare animals and other sightings**

A handful of rarer sightings added a special element to the month's game viewing.

- Two caracals were seen near Gudzane Dam, an exceptional encounter of these seldom seen cats.
- A few black-backed jackals were also observed trotting purposefully through the area, while a striking herd of eight sable moved gracefully across the landscape.
- A porcupine sighting rounded off one evening, offering a glimpse of this shy, nocturnal species.

### **Birds**

- Several of our largest and most striking predatory birds made memorable appearances this month. A huge lappet-faced vulture was seen perched prominently atop a dead leadwood, while a martial eagle was observed finishing off the remains of a Swainson's spurfowl. Perhaps the most remarkable sighting, however, was a first for our area, a Narina trogon flying across the road right in front of one of our guides. His initial disbelief slowly gave way to awe as he recognised the unmistakable bird, with its vivid emerald, green wings and back contrasted by a rich cherry-red breast. Typically, these elusive birds remain hidden within the dense forest along the base of the Drakensberg mountains to our west, relying on their excellent camouflage, making this fleeting yet clear sighting particularly special.

**Some Bush Stories follow, as well as the April Gallery.**

## The impala rut

Article by Bradwin Adendorff

After an exceptionally wet start to the year, when heavy rains and flooding washed through parts of the Singita concession in the Kruger National Park, the land feels renewed. The valleys are green again, the air carries the scent of fresh grass, and life seems to be breathing a little deeper. And within that renewal, the impala are showing signs - hinting that something is beginning to change.

Rams are drawing closer together. Low, ancient-sounding calls roll across the hills at dawn and dusk ever more frequently. Small sparring matches flicker up in clouds of dust. Even in their bodies, there are signs that something is awakening. These are the first whispers of the rut, the impala's annual breeding season, a time when instinct takes over and the quiet rhythm of grazing gives way to the organized chaos of combat.

For most of the year impala move gently through the bush, alert but unhurried. Yet as the days begin to shorten, an invisible signal passes through them. Hormones rise, harems are claimed, and males find themselves driven by a force older than memory.



Here in the central Kruger, the rut usually arrives in April or May, unfolding over just a few intense weeks. Dominant rams roar their presence into the landscape, challenge rivals, and guard the chance to pass on life. They eat less, sleep lightly, and give themselves fully to the moment.

Nature's timing is precise. After mating, females carry their lambs for about six to seven months so that new life arrives with the summer rains, when the earth is generous and the grass is rich. Many lambs are born within days of one another, a quiet reminder of how the wild protects its own through abundance.

Impala sit at the heart of this ecosystem, and their rhythm shapes the movements of predators and prey alike. When they shift, the whole landscape subtly responds.

Day length guides the season, but rainfall nourishes it. This year's generous rains have left the herds strong and healthy, perhaps allowing the first signs of the rut to surface a little sooner. As we move through this green and breathing wilderness, those distant roars feel like more than sound — they feel like the land turning a page.

The impala remind us that life here moves in cycles of rest and intensity, growth and surrender, all woven into a rhythm far older than ourselves.

## The dawn chorus: why birds sing at first light

By Walter Mabilane

As the sun rises over the Lebombo mountains, the bushveld comes alive with a layered chorus of bird calls. On crisp, clear mornings, this natural soundtrack feels especially vivid, echoing across open savannas, riverine forests, and mopane woodlands. Far from random noise, this early-morning performance is shaped by purpose, timing, and the unique environment of the park.

### 1. Claiming space in the bush

At first light, many birds begin vocalising to mark out their territory. In a vast but competitive environment like Kruger, space equals access to food and nesting sites. Males, in particular, project their songs across the landscape to signal ownership and discourage rivals. Calm, clear mornings help these calls travel further, making them more effective without the need for physical confrontation.



### 2. Winning over a mate

The dawn chorus also doubles as a stage for courtship. Male birds advertise their fitness through the strength and persistence of their songs. In Singita Kruger National Park, species like hornbills, robins, and thrushes take advantage of the soft morning light, when visibility is good and temperatures are still mild, to pair vocal displays with movement and posture that attract females.

### 3. Silence amplifies sound

Before the park's daytime activity begins, vehicles moving, insects buzzing, winds picking up, the environment is relatively quiet. This natural stillness allows bird calls to stand out clearly. With fewer competing sounds, even subtle notes can carry across surprising distances, making communication more efficient.



4. Perfect acoustic conditions  
Early mornings in Kruger often bring cooler air and minimal wind, ideal for sound transmission. These stable atmospheric conditions allow bird calls to travel cleanly without distortion. It's a small but important advantage in a landscape where being heard can make all the difference.

5. Driven by natural rhythms  
Like all wildlife, birds follow internal biological clocks. These circadian rhythms cue them to become active just before sunrise. Seasonal shifts, such as longer daylight hours in summer, can intensify this behaviour, leading to particularly energetic dawn choruses during breeding periods.

6. Keeping in touch  
Not all morning calls are about competition or romance. Many species use vocalisations to maintain contact with mates, family groups, or flocks after a night of separation. In the dense thickets and tall grasses of Kruger, sound is often the most reliable way to stay connected.

7. A living indicator of ecosystem health

A rich dawn chorus in Kruger National Park is more than just

beautiful; it signals a thriving ecosystem. Diverse and active birdlife reflects healthy habitats, abundant food sources, and balanced ecological relationships. For visitors and conservationists alike, these morning sounds are a reassuring sign that the system is functioning as it should.

The sunrise symphony at SKNP is not just a pleasant backdrop to the day, it's a complex, purposeful exchange prompted by survival, reproduction, and environment. Each note carries meaning, whether it's a warning, an invitation, or a simple check-in. Listening closely reveals that this daily ritual is one of the most intricate and telling expressions of life in the wild.

April Gallery

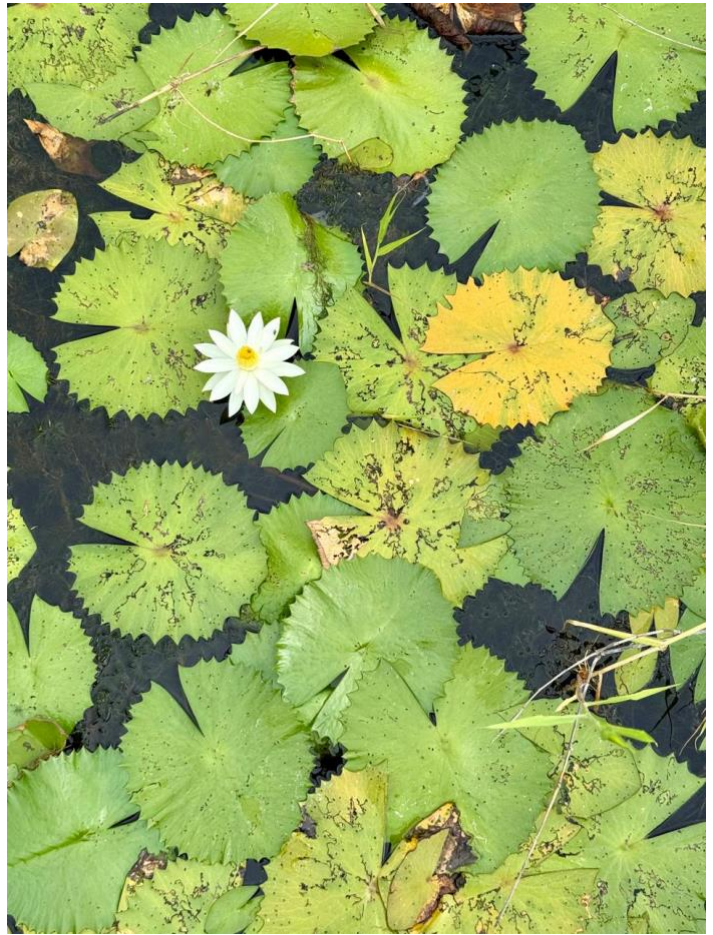


African wild dog with Sharpe's grysbok. By Monika Malewski  
Elephant bull at sunset. By Damin Dallas



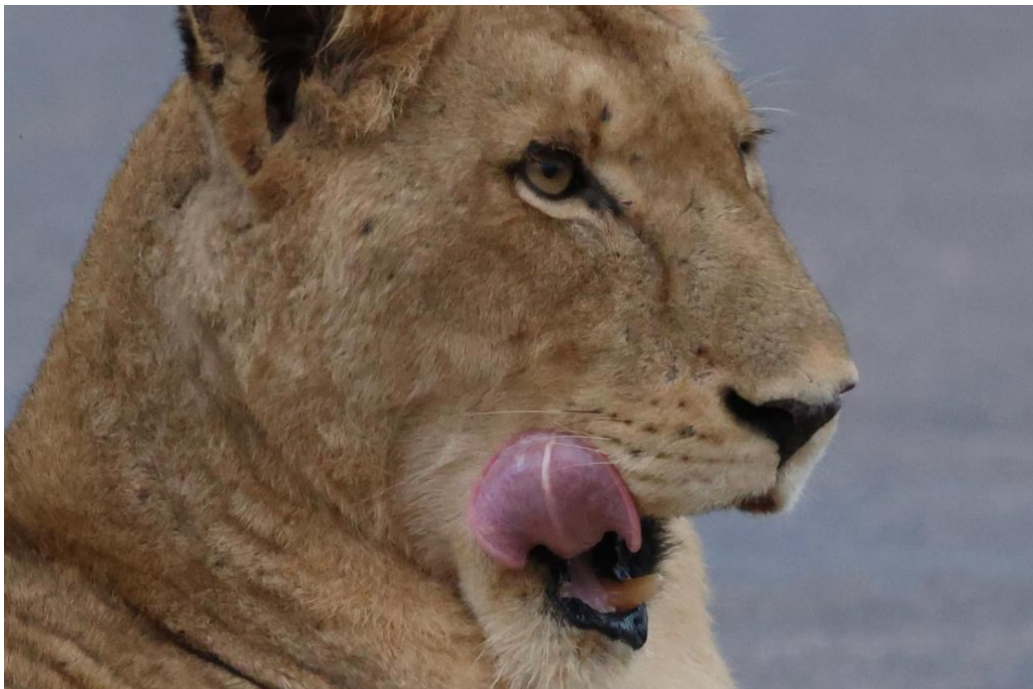


Male waterbuck. By Walter Mabilane



Night water-lily. By Damin Dallas

Shish lioness. By Walter Mabilane





Kori bustard. By Walter Mabilane

Giraffe bull. By Damin Dallas

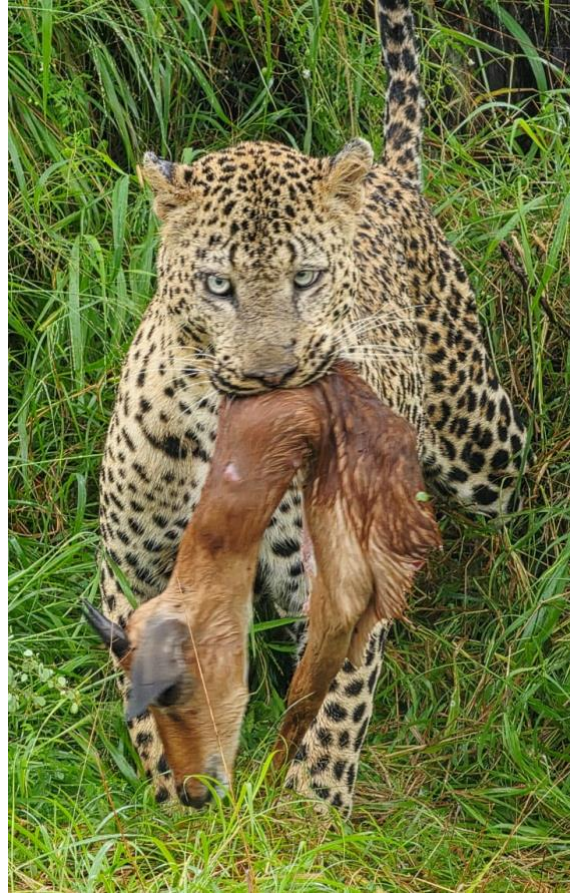


Dazzle of zebra. By Damin Dallas





Nhlayo and an elephant bull. By Damin Dallas



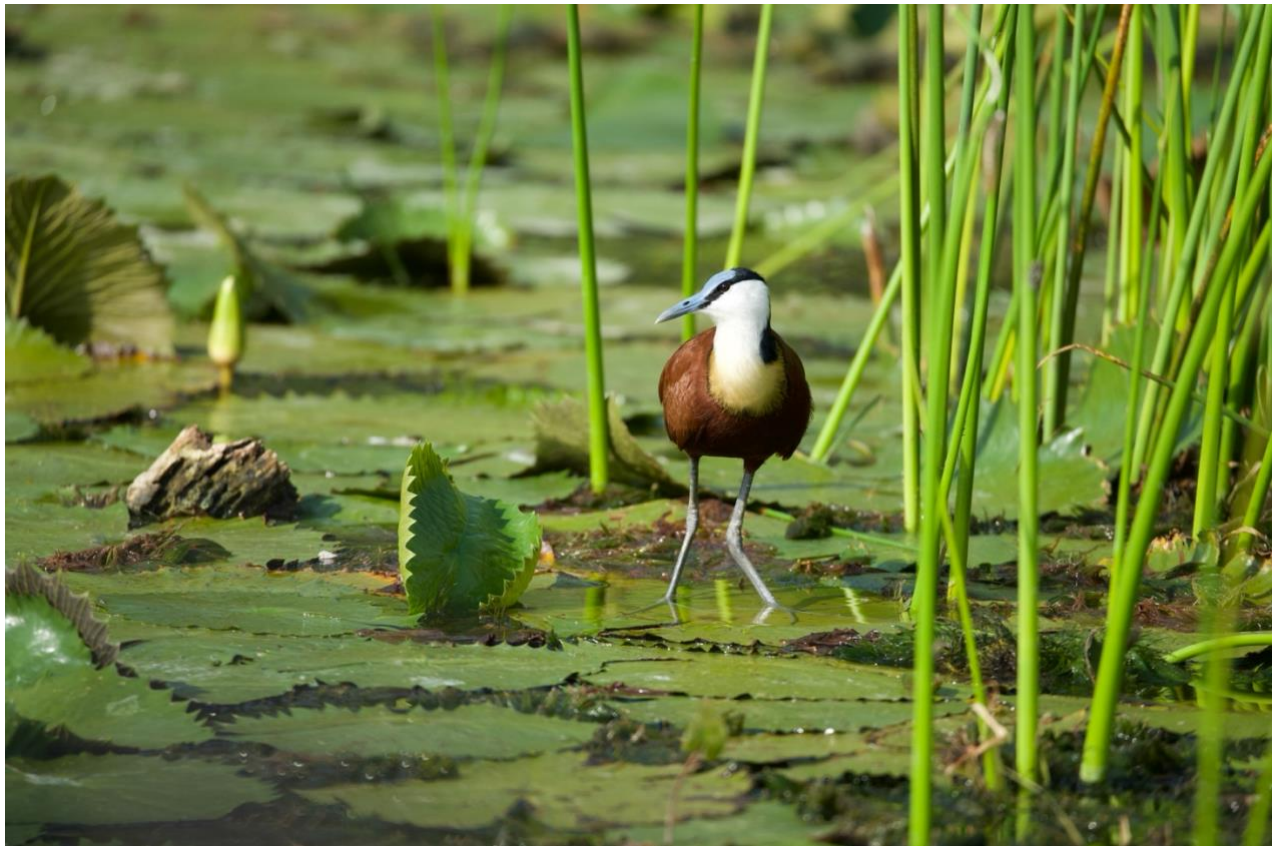
Lebombo male leopard. By Walter Mabilane

African wild dogs. By Monika Malewski





Dragonfly. By Monika Malewski  
African jacana. By Monika Malewski



Compiled by Monika Malewski